

REMARKS

Claims 1-89, 91, 94-121, and 133 were in this application, but are cancelled and replaced by new claims 143-165. Claims 90, 92-93, 122-132 and 134-142, which were withdrawn from further consideration, are also cancelled. The new claims include no new matter and are supported by the application. It is submitted that all the objections to and rejections of claims 1-89, 91, 94-121, and 133 in the present office action are moot.

Claims 143-165 are patentably distinct over the prior art cited by the Examiner, and are in full compliance with the requirements of 35 U.S.C. §112. These claims are presented, not for the purpose of patentability within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. §§101, 102, 103, or 112, but simply to clarify the invention and to round out the scope of protection to which Applicants are entitled.

Drawings

Page 27 of the drawings was objected to under 37 C.F.R. 1.83(b). Page 27 is not necessary and has been deleted. Applicants therefore request that the objection to drawing be withdrawn.

Specification

The abstract of the disclosure was objected to. A new abstract has been submitted, and Applicants therefore request that the objection be withdrawn.

Claims

All the claims (claims 1-89, 91, 94-121, and 133) were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over McGrath (Patent No. 6,137,945) in view of Nagasaka (Patent No. 6,195,497) in view of Lavellee (Patent No. 5,737,552). Applicants submit that McGrath is not an effective reference against the present application.

McGrath (U.S. Patent No. 6,137,945) has a U.S. filing date of April 9, 1997. The present application, on the other hand, is entitled to the benefit under 35 U.S.C. 119 of Japanese application 08-249381 filed on September 20, 1996 in Japan. A certified copy of such foreign application was filed in international application No. PCT/JP97/03343 filed September 19, 1997, on which the instant application is based. An acknowledgement of such claim of priority and receipt of the priority document is provided on the summary sheet of the present Office Action. A verified translation in English of the priority application (i.e., 08-249381) accompanies this Amendment.

Accordingly, the present application has an effective filing date which antedates the U.S. filing date of McGrath. As a result, it is respectfully submitted that McGrath is not an effective prior art reference against the present application.

Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that the above-described §103 rejection based on McGrath either alone or in combination with Nagasaka and Lavellee be withdrawn.

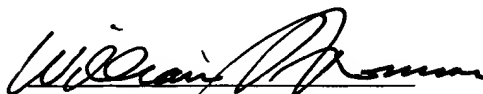
Furthermore, although Applicants have asserted that McGrath is not an effective reference against the present application, such assertion is not a representation concerning distinctions and/or similarities between the present invention and McGrath. Applicants reserve their right to traverse any further rejection that may be presented on a similar document and having an earlier effective date.

Please charge any fees incurred by reason of this response to Deposit Account No.

50-0320.

Respectfully submitted,
FROMMER LAWRENCE & HAUG LLP

By:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'William S. Frommer', written over a horizontal line.

William S. Frommer

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